



April 2, 2024

Senator Melissa Wiklund
Health & Human Services Committee
Minnesota Senate Building | Room 1100
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Wiklund and Committee Members:

Minnesota's Prenatal to Three Coalition (PN-3) urges you to support SF 5032, to fund a study to learn more about the barriers pregnant and parenting unhoused youth face every day. The PN-3 Coalition represents a diverse group of stakeholders supporting policies and programs aimed at ensuring infants, toddlers and families with young children have the best start in life regardless of income, geography, or race.

The brain development that occurs during the first few years of life is the foundation that all future social, emotional, and cognitive learning is built upon. Children of unhoused youth are not only more likely to be exposed to substances during the pregnancy, but are more likely to experience early developmental trauma during this critically important developmental period of their lives.

Parenting is difficult enough without the additional stress and mental health issues that come with being unhoused. Pregnant unhoused youth are often ineligible for traditional youth shelters and face barriers to accessing adequate perinatal healthcare and education. As a result, many children of unhoused youth are separated from their parents, enter the child welfare system, and will experience homelessness again.

This bill would study ways to disrupt the cycle of inter-generational homelessness by identifying barriers and opportunities to better meet the needs of unhoused pregnant youth in Minnesota. We urge you to act today and support SF 5032, to positively position unhoused youth to care for the healthy growth and development of their babies and families.

Thank you,

Deb Fitzpatrick,
Children's Defense Funds-MN, 
Co-Chair

Nancy Jost,
West Central Initiative,
Co-Chair

Laura LaCroix-Dalluhn
MN Prenatal to Three (PN-3) Coalition
Coalition Coordinator